

## Marjorie: Vivien Wilson

I always looked forward to Wednesdays. After sitting typing endlessly boring pieces about faceted classification systems in the newly opened London Business School Library, I would pack up and leave on the dot of 5 pm. I'd hurry up Charing Cross Road, toting my artboards and oil paints. I'd pass Foyles bookshop and hurry into the art school, its old wooden flooring multi-hued with splashes of paint from generations of student endeavours. The very walls gave off the heady smell of linseed and turpentine. It felt like home. I'd always dreamt of being an artist. For two hours I'd forget everything except trying to capture Marjorie in paint.

Flamboyant was how I'd describe Marjorie, the life model, at St Martins School of Art. All the other models were quiet, modest souls. Not so Marjorie! Aged in her late fifties, with breasts the size of cantaloups, she posed for us. During her rest breaks she would prance stark naked waving a purple chiffon scarf in the air, as she inspected her portraits. She terrified the besuited businessmen who sketched her - tiny postage-stamp sized drawings on large sheets of white paper. Occasionally, she posed fully dressed for the portrait class. I've a painting of her still – wearing reds and purples, her silver hair swept stylishly off her face. She always wore lots and lots of jewellery – heavy ropes of red and purple beads.

The class finished, I would make my way back to the flat which I shared with my sister and two other girls in Manchester Street, W.1. If it was windy, I struggled with my wet canvas, carrying it face out, so it wouldn't cover my coat in daubs of paint. If it was raining, I'd catch the tube trying to ignore the smirks as people caught sight of my latest effort.

Back then my sister was going out with rather a stuffy young man - John, I think his name was. 'So, let me see your masterpiece,' he asked politely one evening as I headed to my room. I revealed my work. He turned puce and his eyes nearly popped out of his head as he viewed Marjorie, in all her naked glory. Aghast, he coughed and spluttered, 'Oh my God – it's my Auntie Marge!' he said, and fled out of the flat.